

THE *SPHOṬA* OF LANGUAGE AND THE EXPERIENCE OF *ŚABDATATTVA*

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1. Introduction

Bhartṛhari, the Indian linguistic Philosopher from the Grammar tradition, conceives Reality as a Word-Principle or Word-Essence (*Śabdatattva*). In Bhartṛhari's view the question of language is essentially interwoven into the experience of the question of ultimate Reality – *Śabdatattva*. Hence, a thinking of Language is simultaneously a thinking of *Śabdatattva*. For Bhartṛhari the language we speak is the medium of the self-expression of the ultimate Reality communicated through all meaning-bearing words. The real breaks forth (*sphuṭ*) through the medium of speech (*śabda*). This *śabda-sphoṭa* is not merely a means to truth or reality but is the Truth and Reality. The awareness of this fact leads one to the realization of the meaningfulness of Reality which is an experience of the deeper unity of the essence of language-*Śabdatattva*. This paper is an attempt to look into the concept of language and experience of the Reality of language as has been envisioned by Bhartṛhari.

2. *Śabdatattva* as *Śabdabrahman*

Bhartṛhari begins his treatment of language with the identification of *śabda* (word) with Brahman. In his vision Brahman is the essence, inner meaning or *sphoṭa* (a latent unitary medium which is the real meaning-bearing whole) of every word. He calls this inner principle of word *Śabdatattva* which is the underlying unity beneath everything and is considered to be the Supreme Reality in the Philosophy of the Grammar School.

The *Śabdatattva* of Bhartṛhari differs from the Upaniṣadic conception of *Śabdabrahman*. According to the Upaniṣadic vision, there are two Brahmanas to be known: Word Brahman and the Supreme, it is this Supreme Brahman that man reaches when he is proficient in the word

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Brahman.¹ Whereas for Bhartṛhari *Śabdatattva* is the Absolute and there is no distinction between the *Śabdabrahman* and the Supreme. The speech essence (*Śabdatattva*) is the ultimate Reality which has neither beginning nor end and is unchanging. Bhartṛhari expounds this view in the very first verse of *Vākyapadīya* thus:

That beginningless and endless One, the imperishable Brahman of which the essential nature is the Word, which manifests itself into objects and from which is the creation of the Universe.²

Conception of Brahman as the Word-Principle or the identification of Brahman with the *Śabdatattva* forms the central theme of *Vākyapadīya* which gives a kind of unity to the whole text. In fact, Bhartṛhari is ever conscious, throughout the *Vākyapadīya*, of the ultimate Word-Principle, the *Śabdatattva*, Brahman out of which the whole cosmos and our experience of it consisting of an infinite variety of cognitions, objects and words expressive of them are manifested.

Most of the Indian scholars deal with *Vākyapadīya*, the master-piece of Bhartṛhari, as a work which has a non-dualistic philosophy as its foundation. Bhartṛhari considered particular things as real or substantial in the everyday world but they are not real or substantial in the ultimate sense. For him, substance is the universal in particular things which is nothing other than Brahman as existence. Brahman as substance is also called *tattva* (thatness) which is further referred to as *para* (the highest one).³ As *tattva* it neither is nor is not; it is neither one nor differentiated; neither combined nor separated; neither changing nor unchanging.⁴ This single (substance) is seen as language, meaning, and the relation between them. It is what is seen, seeing, the seer, and the result of seeing.⁵

3. *Sphoṭa*: The Unitary Medium of Expression

Among the various views that have been propounded by different schools on *śabda*, word, the doctrine of *sphoṭa* as *Śabdatattva* upheld by

¹S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953, 833.

²Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya Kāṇḍa I*, tr., K. A. S. Iyer, Poona: Deccan College, 1965, I.1.

³Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya*, Chapter III, Part I., tr., K. A. S. Iyer, Poona: Deccan College 1971, III.1.20.

⁴Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya*, III.2.12.

⁵H. G. Coward & K. Raja, eds., *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, vol. V, *The Philosophy of the Grammarians*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 1990, 157.

Bharṭṛhari is a penetrative inquiry into the real nature of word and meaning. According to Bharṭṛhari *sphoṭa* is the conveyor of real meaning. He says: “In the words which are expressive the learned discern two elements: one (*sphoṭa*) is the cause of the real word which, the other (*dhvani*) is used to convey the meaning.”⁶ Thus, Bharṭṛhari advocates that a word (*śabda*) has two aspects, namely, the word sound (*dhvani*) and word meaning (*artha*). Although they may appear to be essentially different, they are really identical. What Bharṭṛhari emphasizes is the meaning bearing or revelatory function of this two sided unity, the *sphoṭa*, which he maintains is eternal and given in nature. The apparent difference is seen to result from the various external manifestations of the single internal *sphoṭa*.

The real expressive word, the indivisible *sphoṭa* is over and above the sounds which are many in number and are uttered by the speaker in a temporal sequence. This means that the separate letters of a word or words of the sentence merely manifest the *sphoṭa* or meaning-whole. As a rule, the sounds which are uttered by the speaker manifest the expressive word, which already exists in the hearer. In other words, when one utters a word which is in his mind, he produces a sequence of different sounds in order to make a sense out of many words. So it is not the manifesting sounds which convey the meaning but the indivisible sequenceless word that is hidden behind the visible words. That is why the listener, though first hears a series of sounds ultimately perceives the utterance as a unity. In his twofold analysis of language as uttered speech and as the bearer of meaning Bharṭṛhari transgresses the level of uttered language to find its connection with thought, and, ultimately with the unifying ground of meaning. From the point of view of Bharṭṛhari *sphoṭa* seems to represent the linguistic symbol as well as the transcendental reality.

The whole word or idea exists in the mind of the speaker as a unity or *sphoṭa*. It is as it were an immediate intuition without any subject-object distinction. But when the speaker utters it, he produces a sequence of different word sounds so that what is really one – the *sphoṭa* or whole idea – appears to be many. Though *sphoṭa* is a unitary meaning-whole, it may have as many different manifestations as there are speakers to utter it – each with his own peculiar way of putting it into words, his own speed of speaking, his own accent, etc. This means even when the external manifestations are different the inner meaning of the *sphoṭa* remains

⁶Bharṭṛhari, *Vākyapadīya Kāṇḍa* I, 44.

unchanged. One needs to go through the unreal manifestation before he reaches the partless whole.

4. *Vākya-Sphoṭa*: The Meaning Bearing Unit

The discussions in the second *kāṇḍa* of *Vākya-padīya* occupy a central question whether it is the sentence (*vākya*) or the word (*pada*) that constitutes the primary unit of language. Bhartr̥hari calls the upholders of the sentence as *vākya-vādins*, i.e., the Grammarians and the upholders of the word as *padadarśins*, i.e., the Mīmāṃsakās.⁷ In contrast to the Mīmāṃsakās, who conceive the sentence meaning or the complete thought as resulting from the summation of the individual meanings, Bhartr̥hari understands *sphoṭa* primarily as an indivisible sentence which is expressive of sense. Technically, it is also called *akāṇḍa vākya sphoṭa*. A sentence is neither a unified collection nor an ordered series of words. A word is an artificial construction, and an isolated word a fiction. A sentence alone is the unit of utterance, a single indivisible entity with a single undivided meaning that is grasped as a unity in a flash of insight *pratibhā*.

Bhartr̥hari has definitely stated that a word or letter has no reality by itself apart from that of a sentence. The basic logic behind his thinking is that the whole is prior to the parts. Bhartr̥hari makes his stand clear by observing that man does not speak in individual words. For it is the whole idea or complete thought which is the expressive aspect of *śabda* (*sphoṭa*). He gives an example for it. Even when a word is used merely in the form of a substantive noun (e.g., ‘tree’), the verb ‘to be’ is always understood so that what is indicated is really a complete thought (e.g., ‘It is a tree’).⁸ He continues further saying that the real unit of language is the sentence and that for pedagogical purposes words are abstracted from the sentence and ascribed a meaning. In short, for Bhartr̥hari the sentence as a whole has the meaning.

Completeness of meaning is then the test of a sentence. It points to the fact that even a single word can be a sentence if it achieves the completeness of meaning in some way. It is a plain truth that without the unifying function of the meaning of a sentence words cannot stand; they will scatter and wither away. This means that the meaning has to stand as a

⁷Bhartr̥hari, *Vākya-padīya Kāṇḍa II*, tr., K. A. S. Iyer, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 1977, II. 57.

⁸Bhartr̥hari, *Vākya-padīya with Vṛtti*, tr., K. A. S. Iyer, Poona: Deccan College 1965, I.24-26.

principle at the root of words and sentences. The difficulty with individual word according to Bharṭṛhari is its indefiniteness. Words are apparently imperfect because they depend upon a higher unity of a sentence. Bharṭṛhari admits the fact that no knowledge is possible without words. Words as carriers of meaning are really related to meaning. He is of the opinion that there is a natural fitness between the word and meaning. The purpose of Bharṭṛhari seems to be not to disparage the value of words but to deny the transcendental validity of parts as they are always parts and never wholes.

5. *Sphoṭa* and *Artha*

It is the indivisible sentence which when manifested through sounds conveys the meaning (*artha*). But how a sound is related to a thing or how the word uttered by one becomes so powerful and active as to convey the intended sense to the listener is a question yet to be answered. A satisfactory answer to this question cannot be given unless we can sufficiently prove the existence of some kind of a relationship between the two. For Bharṭṛhari the relation between word and meaning is that of a natural one. Since words come into use, they are related with their meanings. In *Vākyapadīya* Bharṭṛhari defines this relation as the natural fitness (*yogyatā*) of the words.⁹ He assumes that the word is never devoid of its *yogyatā* which is a given relation between word and meaning and is not shifted. Bharṭṛhari considers it as the most plausible explanation that could appeal to one’s reason. That is why he assumes with boldness and perspicuity that *śabda* and *artha* are nothing but different aspects of one and the same thing. He elucidates it thus: “According to them, the inner meaning, (that is, the sentence-meaning) is manifested by parts of it. Word and Meaning (that is, Sentence and sentence-meaning) are inseparable (*apṛthaksthītau*) divisions of one Inner Principle.”¹⁰

It points to the fact that *śabda* and *artha* both remain inseparable in the mind prior to their outward manifestation. When it is manifested, its two aspects, the word aspect and the meaning aspect, appear to be differentiated. So what Bharṭṛhari emphasizes again and again is the fact that a word has a double power; it can convey an idea of the form of an expression as well as its content. In other words, words have the power revealing their objects or meanings and that of revealing themselves. Bharṭṛhari compares this double power of words to that of a light which

⁹Bharṭṛhari, *Vākyapadīya*, III.3.29.

¹⁰Bharṭṛhari, *Vākyapadīya*, II.31

reveals itself and, at the same time, reveals other things.¹¹ Hence, these two powers of a word are not really different from the word itself.

According to Bhartrhari *śabda* and *artha* stand towards each other as illuminator (*prakāśaka*) and the illuminated (*prakāśyatvam*).¹² In so far as the word conveys the object, the meaning and its own form, it is like knowledge which reveals itself while revealing the object.¹³ The word cannot reveal the object or convey the meaning unless it reveals itself first. That is why in ordinary communication when the own form of the word is not understood one asks the speaker, ‘what did you say’?¹⁴ In this way Bhartrhari very clearly explains the inseparable relation of *sphoṭa* and *artha*. Thus, in such a relation Bhartrhari has found a fundamental solution of why things are invariably signified by their corresponding words.

Bhartrhari is emphatically of the opinion that no knowledge whatsoever is possible without the operation of the word or *sphoṭa*.¹⁵ He does not evidently make any distinction between knowledge and word. To him they are only different in form but not in essence.¹⁶ He goes on to say without any reservation that knowledge is translated into word. Words that we speak come out as an embodiment of thought, which, then, is called language. So language grows with thought, and in the reverse thought also grows with language. In this process of mutual transformation, the internal knowledge, holds Bhartrhari, assumes an audible form and all ideas are communicated to others.¹⁷ It means that Bhartrhari believed in the impossibility of thinking without speech. Bhartrhari posits that the communication takes place because the word itself contains an inner energy which seeks to burst forth (*sphuṭ*) into expression.¹⁸

6. The Evolution of Language

According to Bhartrhari, there are three levels of languages through which *śabda* or *vāk* passes whenever one speaks. *Sphoṭa* which is at first quite internal, is gradually externalized for the purpose of communication. The following *kārikā* expresses the evolutionary stages of *śabda* as follows:

¹¹Bhartrhari, *Vākyapadīya Kāṇḍa I*, 55.

¹²Bhartrhari, *Vākyapadīya*, II.32.

¹³Bhartrhari, *Vākyapadīya Kāṇḍa I*, 50.

¹⁴Bhartrhari, *Vākyapadīya Kāṇḍa I*, 57.

¹⁵Bhartrhari, *Vākyapadīya Kāṇḍa I*, 123.

¹⁶Bhartrhari, *Vākyapadīya*, II.31.

¹⁷Bhartrhari, *Vākyapadīya*, I.112-113.

¹⁸Bhartrhari, *Vākyapadīya*, I.51.

This Science of Grammar is the Supreme and wonderful source of the knowledge of the threefold word, comprising many paths, of the *Vaikharī* (the Elaborated), the *Madhyamā* (the middle one) and the *Paśyantī* (the seeing One).¹⁹

These stages namely, the *vaikharī*, *madhyamā*, and *paśyantī* are not defined or described anywhere in the *kārikās*. It is the *Vṛtti* which gives some information about them. *Paśyantī*, the first stage is one and absolutely free from all differentiation and sequence. It is so subtle that it cannot be perceived by senses. It is indivisible, it is the inner light, it is the subtle word and it is imperishable. At this stage, no distinction is possible between sound and sense. In a word it is the pre-mental stage which represents the ultimate Reality. *Vṛtti* on *Vākyapadīya* I.14 presents *paśyantī* as the supreme Reality, *Śabdabrahman*, which is identified with *pratibhā* the flash of insight of the principle of consciousness.

The second stage *madhyamā* is purely mental and is not audible to others. Being one with the mind which is sequenceless, it is also sequenceless, but appears to have sequence. In this stage, the word and the meaning are differentiated from each other, but each one is still a unity. It could be compared to the *vākya-sphoṭa* in its mental separation into sentence meaning and a sequence of manifesting word sounds, none of which have yet been uttered. In other words it is mental and conceptual in nature. It represents the manifestation of meaning-essence on the level of thought. All the elements linguistically relevant to the uttered speech are present in his stage in the latent form.

Vaikharī, the third stage, is the word that is audible to others. *Prāṇa* (breath) plays a great part in it and so it has definite sequence and form. Here both the word and the meaning are fully differentiated. At this stage all the individual speech peculiarities of the speaker are present in the utterance. The *vaikharī* is, however, distinguished from the rest by being perfectly audible and capable of being expressed through the medium of letters. This is, therefore, known as the popular form of speech current in human society. It is the actual utterance, expressing the intention of the speaker and understood by the hearer.

7. Dhvani of Sphoṭa

The meaning principle *sphoṭa*, although it is unitary and eternal in nature, requires many imperfectly suggestive expressions before its meaning is fully grasped or intuitively realized in one's mind. These suggestive

¹⁹Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya Kāṇḍa* I, 143.

expressions, i.e., the uttered expression or the manifesting sounds produced by the articulatory organs are called *dhvani* in Bharṭṛhari's language. In simple terms *dhvani* is the individual letter sound which suggest or point out something. This something which is indicated by the *dhvani*, according to Bharṭṛhari, is the *śabda* (*sphoṭa*, the real word). So *dhvani* could very well be called the external aspect of internal *sphoṭa*. Now for Bharṭṛhari *dhvani* and *sphoṭa* are the special names of the two aspects of the expressive word mentioned by him in *Vākyapadīya* I.44. Hence, *dhvani* is the name or the sound which the speaker utters and which is the manifestor of real word, namely, *sphoṭa*. *Sphoṭa*, when manifested by the *dhvani* conveys the meaning. So the idea that the real word is the *sphoṭa*, an indivisible entity over and above the sound (*dhvani*) which are uttered by the speaker and heard by the listener and which conveys the meaning according to convention is the basis of Bharṭṛhari's linguistic outlook. Although the individual letter sound (*dhvani*) varies with the individual speaker, this does not matter since they aim at the manifestation of one changeless *sphoṭa*. Meaning in Bharṭṛhari's view, therefore, is not conveyed from the speaker to the hearer, rather the spoken words serve as stimulus to reveal the meaning which is potentially present within the consciousness of every hearer.²⁰

Bharṭṛhari further distinguishes two kinds of *dhvanis*, namely the *prākṛta dhvani* and the *vaikṛta dhvani*. In the *Vṛtti* on *Vākyapadīya* I.76, Bharṭṛhari makes an inner distinction within the *dhvanis*. *Dhvanis* in their first moment, that is at the time of the manifestation of *sphoṭa*, are called *prākṛtadhvanis* (primary sounds). Those are called *prākṛtadhvanis* without which the form of the *sphoṭa* would remain unmanifested and therefore unperceived. As for Bharṭṛhari the primary sounds can be short, long or prolated. Duration seems to be the basis of this distinction. These properties of the primary sounds are wrongly attributed to the *sphoṭa*.

As soon as we hear the primary sounds, we perceive the *sphoṭa*. But the perception of the *sphoṭa* does not disappear at once. It lasts a little while more in quick speech, a little longer in speech of medium speed and longer still in slow speech. As Iyer sees, according to Bharṭṛhari the sounds which follow the succeeding moments are like echoes or reverberations (*anuraṇanārupā*) of those of the first moment. They are the *vaikṛta dhvanis* (secondary sounds) and are the cause of the repeated

²⁰Bharṭṛhari, *Vākyapadīya Kāṇḍa* I, 85-86.

cognitions of the *sphoṭa*.²¹ The secondary sounds do not in any way affect the quality of the *sphoṭa* already manifested by the primary sounds. Hence they are external to the *sphoṭa*.

8. Experience of *Sphoṭa* as *Śabdatattva*

Words that we speak, says Bhartṛhari, come out as an embodiment of thought, which then, is called language. The essence of Bhartṛhari’s view lies in the conception that the Absolute Existence itself manifests in the form of words and their meaning. There is no difference between them; Brahman Himself is the word. Our speech imperfectly imitates this Absolute word. Language, according to the Grammarian, not only reveals reality, but it is reality. Whatever is, is capable of being named. The unnameable is the non-existent. Thus there is an intimate relation posited between thought and language. All the things that comprise reality are of the nature of the word because they are apprehended as identical with it in all one’s cognitions. The whole phenomenon of material existence is only an appearance of the *Śabdatattva* which is identical with the ultimate reality, Brahman. Thus language itself is the Reality.

Real appears as words and as objects denoted by them, though this distinction is but a convenient fiction. According to Bhartṛhari speech and thought are but two aspects of the same Speech-Principle. The sentence is the fundamental linguistic fact and letters and words are unreal abstractions from it. One primary problem faced by Bhartṛhari was how the passing sounds constituting a word could have a single meaning for the listener. He postulated a meaning-bearing symbol called *sphoṭa*, behind the several phonemes forming a word, or many words making up a sentence. It was the eternal meaning that was communicated by way of suggestion through sounds. *Sphoṭa* in its literal sense is normally defined as ‘that from which the meaning bursts forth,’ i.e., shines forth, in other words the word as expressing a meaning. The basic logic behind his thinking is that the whole is prior to the parts.

Hence Bhartṛhari’s *sphoṭa* is the unuttered stage of speech as the indivisible whole. The *sphoṭa* breaks into words through human speech and Bhartṛhari finds this speech potency as an essential trait of human consciousness. The world exists only where words exist. For whatever is, is capable of being named.

²¹K. A. S. Iyer, *Bhartṛhari: A Study of the Vākyapadīya in the Light of Ancient Commentaries*, Poona: Deccan College, 1969, 174.

9. *Śabdatattva*: The Principle of Integration

Bhartrhari emphasizes in unambiguous language that the ultimate purpose of the study of Grammar is to secure release from the bondage of ignorance. This release is to be reached by means of a communion known as *śabdayoga*, *śabdapūrva yoga* or *vāgyoga*. Hence, Bhartrhari sees the *Śabdatattva* – Word-Principle, the *sphoṭa* of Language as a principle of integration in our everyday existence. Towards the end of the first *kāṇḍa* Bhartrhari comes back to this idea and tells that the purification of the word (*śabdasaṃskāra*) is the means to the attainment of the Supreme Self who is the Word-Principle (*Śabdatattva*). In the vision of Bhartrhari the very ontological reality of *vāk* in its various levels amounts to a description of the path by which *mokṣa* (ultimate union or realization which man can have with the *Śabdatattva*) may be attained.

Verse I.14 of *Vākyapadīya* states: “It (Grammar) is the door to liberation, the remedy for all the impurities of speech, the purifier of all the sciences and it shines in every branch of knowledge.” The *Vṛtti* on the above verse makes it clear that the use of correct word not only reveals knowledge, but also simultaneously offers itself as a means towards acquiring the spiritual merit necessary for man to be united with *Śabdatattva*. Bhartrhari advocates Grammar as the first step toward ultimate integration which consists in liberation.²² Bhartrhari does not seem to make a distinction between religious and strictly philosophical speculations. For him, knowing Brahman (though he does not identify it as God) through *Vāgyoga* can lead one to the attainment of *mokṣa*.²³

Vāgyoga is a kind of meditation which aims at raising the level of the consciousness of words to the highest stage of the Word-Principle. The complete absence of all sorts of differentiation and sequence is the chief characteristic of it. The *vāgyoga* demands a kind of *śabdasaṃskāra*,²⁴ i.e., the knowledge of purification of words. Bhartrhari emphasizes the need for purifying one’s speech. As Bhartrhari says in his *Nītiśataka*, right speech (*vaṇi*) alone adds to the handsomeness of one’s personality more than anything else. While other things perish the gracefulness of speech lasts forever.²⁵ This purification consists in discarding of unchaste or

²²Bhartrhari, *Vākyapadīya Kāṇḍa* I, 16.

²³Bhartrhari, *Vākyapadīya Kāṇḍa* I, 20.

²⁴Bhartrhari, *Vākyapadīya Kāṇḍa* I, 132.

²⁵*Keūrāṇi na bhūṣayanti puruṣam hārāna candrojjvalā / na snānam na vilepanam na kusumam nāalamkṛtā mūrdhajāh / vaṇyekā samalamkaroti puruṣam yā*

corrupt (*apabhraṁśa*) words and adherence to chaste or correct words (*sādhu śabda*) which culminate in the attainment of the ultimate Reality.

The essence of Bhartṛhari’s view lies in the conception that the Absolute Existence itself manifests in the form of words and their meaning. There is no difference between them; Brahman Himself is the Word. Our speech imperfectly imitates this Absolute Word. Liberation consists ultimately in the understanding of this truth. When one fails to recognize this fact, he identifies real with wrong associations and relations: wrong associations are due to the state of ignorance (*avidyā*). Ignorance is just that and nothing more in Bhartṛhari’s vision. When one is able to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, he liberates himself from wrong that is unreal, and he would realize right which is real. So liberation consists in the distinguishing power which is arrived at through *śabdayoga*. *Śabdayoga*, is therefore, adherence to the truth of the *Śabdatattva*.

It is only the proper grammar and proper use of language that will lead us beyond the mire of confusion and wrong associations. One who has attained such a state of existence is a perfect man, who distinguishes truth, speaks truth and, as a result, acts truthfully. Perfection in thinking, speaking and acting makes one’s life more and more integrated. Thus, *Śabdatattva* of Bhartṛhari’s conception, in its final analysis, acts like a principle of integration which culminates in the ultimate liberation. *Vṛtti* on *Vākyapadīya* I.130 declares the *vāgyoga* as a process that involves the breaking of one’s ego-sense, the sense of the ‘I’ and ‘mine’ and thereby realizing the non-differentiated Word which is the Absolute. *Vāgyoga* – the *yoga* of speech – lends man to the complete comprehension of truth. Thus through the advancement of *vagyoga* Bhartṛhari has joined to that group of philosophers, for whom goal of philosophy is not mere intellectual satisfaction, but rather spiritual emulation.

10. Conclusion

For Bhartṛhari Real is the essence of words (*Śabdatattva*) and is the Word (*sphoṭa*) itself. The Word is, therefore, called as that from which objects emerge: it is *sphoṭa*. The unique concept of *sphoṭa* is an unparalleled contribution of the Indian Mind. Its identification with Brahman is the point where Grammar and Philosophy meet together. Its appearance is real because of the Real. It is like a tree and its branches. As the branches have

samskr̥tā dhāryate kṣīyante’khila bhuṣṇāni satatam vāgbhuṣaṇam bhuṣaṇam // Nīṭisataka. 19.

no existence apart from the tree so also the appearance has no existence apart from the real. Ultimately, words and objects are nothing but existence itself.

The Grammarians attitude toward word is twofold, i.e., transcendental and empirical. From the transcendental point of view the ultimate Reality is the absolute word (*Śabdatattva*) which is devoid of all distinctions. From the empirical point of view this *Śabdatattva* is subject to further and further divisions. But the word remains unaffected at all times. In fact, it is the sounds which overshadow the real identity of word. In that sense, *sphoṭa* of the Grammarians may be described as the transcendental ground in which the spoken syllables and conveyed meaning find themselves united as word or *śabda*. By assuming *sphoṭa* as an indivisible entity, the Grammarians could solve all the difficulties with regard to the problem of sequence which was a staggering blow to Mīmāṃsist conception of meaning.

Through his careful analysis of *śabda*, Bharṭṛhari has thrown much light on the primordial mystery of language. Language is not merely an instrument of human communication but an indicator of the hidden Word which activates language as a meaning bearing medium of human life. In this way Bharṭṛhari has succeeded in setting a philosophical foundation for *Vyākaraṇa*. His *Vākyapadīya* is a *Vyākaraṇa Darśana* giving *darśan* of the hidden mystery of all meanings behind all words of human communication. In a word, he has made an attempt to present an integral vision of the real and language in the framework of the Philosophy of Grammar. Thus in *Śabdatattva*, humans receive the light of the truth of *sphoṭa* which breaks forth as language, presenting the *Śabdatattva*.